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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2009

In Today's Papers

The European Parliament's Latest Report Calls for Reforms and Criticizes Restrictions on Internet Access, Government Pressure on Media

Vatan, Hurriyet, Milliyet, Aksam, Zaman: Yesterday the European Parliament (PACE) approved the latest report on Turkey by a vote of 528 to 52. Mainstream Hurriyet notes that this report criticized "Turkey's restrictions on internet access and the government's pressure against the media." Mainstream Aksam says the report "urged Turkey to accelerate reforms." Islamist-oriented Zaman highlights the report also "warned against the closure of political parties." Mainstream Vatan notes, "Following in the footsteps of the U.S., Europe is now drawing attention to the role of secularism in Turkey" because the report "highlights the importance of secularism."

Turkish and Greek Business Leaders Call for Peace In Cyprus
Mainstreams Hurriyet and Vatan report that business leaders from Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus released a joint declaration in Nicosia that extended full support towards a peace process in Cyprus. The Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) chairperson Arzuhan Dogan Yalcindag said that if a solution was reached in Cyprus, the economy on the island would develop.

Speculations Swirl Around Obama's Visit to Turkey
Media outlets are fiercely competing to see who can predict what President Obama will do and what it will mean during his visit to Turkey next month. Islamist-oriented Zaman, which is known for its close ties to the government, reports, "In a gesture to Ankara, Obama will address the parliament." Mainstream Milliyet's Athens correspondent reports, "Obama's last stop in Turkey will be a visit to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartolomeos." Meanwhile, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet chimes in a new theory on the meaning of the visit. In "Why is Obama Coming to Turkey?" the paper notes that "Washington Institute Turkey expert Soner Cagaptay says Obama is trying to prevent Turkey from distancing itself from the West." Liberal Radikal columnist Murat Yetkin writes, "Obama is trying to ease the climate of tension that was created by his predecessor."

Obama's PKK Plan (Sabah)

Mainstream Sabah reports that the U.S. sent a diplomatic delegation prior to Secretary Clinton's visit in order to discuss political initiatives to disarm the PKK. The delegation met with politicians of Kurdish descent such as Esat Canan, Serafettin Elci and Orhan Miroglu. The delegation discussed the possibility of an amnesty program and addressed the topic of TRT's new Kurdish broadcasting station, TRT-Ses.

IMF Eases Terms on New Deal with Turkey

Media outlets report the IMF "changed its mind" due to the "resolute" attitude of the Turkish government, and came up with more flexible terms for a possible stand-by deal with Turkey. State Minister Mehmet Simsek told reporters, "The IMF showed flexibility on tax administration, a matter on which we could not agree." The IMF later made new loan proposals to Turkey, and now awaits an invitation from Ankara to meet for negotiations, say papers.

A "Surprise" Energy Summit

Mainstream Sabah reports in "A Surprise Energy Summit" that Energy Minister Guler met with Ambassador James Jeffrey and Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Matt Bryza yesterday "in order to discuss the Nabucco pipeline project." CNN Turk reports Bryza told the 8th Turkish Oil & Gas Conference that "from the topic of energy to the topic of the Middle East, Turkey is one of the closest allies to the U.S."

Aksam and Cumhuriyet report Bryza said the U.S. relationship with Russia needs to be "rearranged." In "The U.S. Opposes Iranian Gas," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports the U.S. sent "warm messages

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to Russia," but was aloof toward Tehran. "The diversification of natural gas pipelines is important, but the inclusion of Iran in the existing projects is not in line with U.S. interests," said Bryza. In the face of President Obama's call on Tehran to "unclench its fist," Bryza said "The international sanctions against Iran are clear," reports Cumhuriyet.

Editorial Commentary on President Gul-Iran-U.S.

Fehmi Kuru wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "When Gul says 'good things are about to happen' he means good things will happen regarding the ongoing process toward finding a solution to the southeast problem. As the president confirms, there is perfect harmony at the state's top level and there is an overall psychology to work toward settlement."

Cengiz Candar wrote in business daily Referans: "There is an overall understanding that terrorism does not solve problems. President Gul's visit to Iran also signals that important developments can happen after the Obama visit, particularly regarding Iran and the Azerbaijan/Armenia issues."

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Just as stated by U.S. Ambassador Jeffrey, Turkey is helping with the Iranian dispute by expressing the American side's sincerity to the Iranian regime. A high level MFA official recently said, 'Turkey has never tried to act as a mediator between the U.S. and Iran, but wanted to facilitate a better understanding on both sides to solve their problems through dialogue.' It is important that Gul expressed the sincere desire in the new American administration for dialogue and diplomacy, and the Iranian side listened to him very carefully."

TV News (CNN Turk) Domestic

- In Silopi in the province of Sirnak, security forces found Thursday more bones and human hair in excavations launched to find the remains of people who disappeared in the 1990s.
- Nihat Ergun, deputy chairman of AKP parliamentary group, says the government will be reshuffled if support for the ruling party declines by 10 percent in comparison to the general elections in [2007](#).
- Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP invited Iraqi President Jalal

Talabani and Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government President Massoud Barzani to join Nevruz celebrations in Diyarbakir.

World

- President Obama has extended sanctions against Iran for another year, saying it continues to pose a threat to U.S. national security.

- Iraqi President Talabani, whose term ends at the end of this year, says he won't run for office again.

- "We all have the right to self determination. That is the aspiration of all the Kurds and it is a natural right," says KRG President Massoud Barzani.

- Muntazar al-Zaydi, the Iraqi journalist who threw his shoes to former US President Bush, was sentenced to three years in prison for assaulting a visiting head of state.

JEFFREY